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ABSTRACT

The way that institutional research directors manage their professional development and career paths was assessed, based on a survey of Association for Institutional Research members. Those contacted had been identified as successful persons in the field who had actively participated in the advancement of institutional research by contributing to the professional literature and/or by accepting leadership positions in professional organizations. All were directors of administrative offices, and persons with primarily academic or research appointments were excluded from the study. Of the individuals who were contacted, 19 responded, representing private institutions of less than 3,000 enrollment (2), public institutions of 10,000 or more (13), and state or provincial boards of higher education or consortia (4). Respondents represented 4 Canadian and 15 U.S. institutions or agencies. Many of the respondents spent 9-11 hours in the office and then spent several additional hours reading or doing office-related work in the evening and weekend. Those persons in offices that are responsible for research and planning and that also are involved in the daily operations of the campus tended to work slightly longer hours and spent less time on professional development activities than did those with more traditional institutional research responsibilities. Directors employed various strategies in an attempt to keep informed and to develop new areas of expertise: professional reading, seeking expert opinion/advice from others, attending workshops and conferences, and taking professional development leave. Attention was also directed to publications and professional contributions, and differences among early-, mid-, and late-career participants. Perspectives and recommendations regarding professional development are also offered. (SW)

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THE AIR PROFESSIONAL FILE No. 13, Summer 1982

The Association for Institutional Research

THE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH DIRECTOR: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER PATH

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University of Massachusetts-Boston

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Most professionals are concerned with maintaining currency in their fields, contributing to the professional literature, and developing their careers. The pressures and constraints of a middle managerial position in an academic setting—with divergent reward systems and uncertain possibilities of academic and/or administrative career advancement—present unique challenges and rewards to the incumbent in such a position.

The position of director of institutional research is unique because it bridges both academic and administrative aspects of the organization. The director is perceived to be part of the academic administrative team but has limited potential for advancement to a senior academic position without significant experience as a faculty member.

During recent years, institutional researchers have become increasingly concerned about professional development and the need to keep up with the rapidly expanding fields of knowledge as well as to develop competencies in new areas. Many individuals have risen rapidly to the position of director; thus, questions also emerge about career path and the availability of higher level administrative positions.

To determine how a number of colleagues managed their own professional development and career paths, a questionnaire was sent to thirty-nine members of the Association for Institutional Research. Those contacted had been identified as successful persons in the field who, because of age and professional success, were likely to have had experience with the issues of professional development and career advancement. They also were considered to have actively participated in the advancement of institutional research by contributing to the professional literature and/or by accepting leadership positions in professional organizations. All were directors of administrative offices. (Persons with primarily academic or research appointments were excluded from the study since the management of time for professional development within an administrative setting was an important aspect of the study.)

Of the thirty-nine individuals to whom the two-page questionnaire was sent, nineteen responded. Their institutional representation follows:

- Three from private institutions of less than 3,000 enrollment—of whom two responded
- One from a private institution of 8,000—who did not respond
- Twenty-seven from public institutions of 10,000 or more—of whom thirteen responded
- Nine from state or provincial boards of higher education or consortia—of whom four responded.

There were no public institutions of less than 10,000 enrollment represented in the survey.

Those surveyed included representatives of nine Canadian and thirty United States institutions or agencies, of whom four Canadian and fifteen U.S. responded.

Present Work Patterns: Setting the Stage

If the respondents to this survey are representative of the field as a whole, we can say that institutional researchers are hard workers. They toil long hours in their jobs. Many work nine to eleven hours in the office and then spend several additional hours reading or doing office-related work in the evening; and it is not unusual for them to devote one-half day or more during the weekend to such activities.

Survey responses disclosed major differences in work load—differences which relate to responsibilities of the office itself and to the type of individual appointment. Those persons in offices which are responsible for research and planning and which also are involved in the daily operations of the campus tend to work slightly longer hours and spend less time on professional development activities than do those with more "traditional" institutional research responsibilities.

Several respondents have joint administrative-academic appointments. Because of the ways their positions are structured, individuals in this situation devote less time to office responsibilities and have considerably greater flexibility in the use of time for reading, research, and professional development.

While the questions about work patterns were not answered by all participants, approximately one-half of the respondents reported that they work through lunch frequently, while others use this time for meetings or professional reading. Several dictate or read while commuting to work, and eighty-four percent (as shown in Table 1) work at night, regardless of the length of the office day.

Table 1
Average Number of Hours Worked per Day
(Total Respondents = 19)

Fewer than Nine Hours (Generally 9:00–5:30)	Nine to Eleven Hours (Generally 7:30/8:30–5:30)	Eleven + to Thirteen Hours (Generally 7:00–6:30)
5 respondents Also work at night? Yes: 5 No: 0	12 respondents Also work at night? Yes: 10 No: 2	2 respondents Also work at night? Yes: 1 No: 1

Information concerning the present work pattern provides a context for more fully understanding the use of time. The following question was asked: "To what extent is your work pattern related to factors such as the number or level of staff who report to you, a lack of control over the use of your time, your personality, and/or other variables?"

The question regarding control over the daily schedule was directed at determining what relationship, if any, might exist between the availability of time and the subsequent use of time for professional development purposes. (For example, if one's daily schedule includes two to three hours of meetings

outside of the office, time for staff coordination, plus time for one's own work, there may not be much time remaining for writing, reading, or research. The more one's office is responsible for institutional operations, the less time may be available for other professional activities.)

Virtually all respondents felt that their work patterns were unrelated either to the number or level of staff who report to them or to a lack of control over their time. Most stated that they work the way they do because of personality factors. The most typical response was this:

> I enjoy working hard and feel that long hours do not need to relate either to anxiety or heart attack. . . . these physiological conditions are related to the pace and anxiety to which one assigns work. I have a tendency to volunteer to assume responsibility. This leads to a lengthy work agenda and, hence, to long hours. (11)

The respondents, with only a few exceptions, did not regard the allocation of time between office responsibilities and professional development as a problem.

Professional Development

Directors employ various strategies in an attempt to keep up with professional reading and to develop new areas of expertise.

Professional reading. The time devoted to this activity varies widely, ranging from fewer than five hours to more than fifteen hours per week. Most of the respondents devote between nine and fourteen hours a week to professional reading, generally about two hours a day. It is more common for them to read in the evening and on the weekend than during the day. Several mentioned that they try to avoid taking office work home at night so that this time can be devoted to reading.

A number responded to the question in terms of "problem solving" rather than general reading. Two typical responses were these:

> I don't read as much as I scan, and I typically only read what seems new or different. Perhaps it's because of my disciplinary background in engineering that I don't think of reading as being the major vehicle in keeping up with my field of knowledge. Analysis of problems that come to me one way or another, or writing or research that I am doing, reading driven by the need to solve a problem or get the necessary background to ask the next question seem to keep me up to date. (9)

> (During) the last few years I have taken on a number of areas of new responsibility about which I knew little or nothing. In preparing for those assignments, I read extensively in the fields. . . . I have found that one learns new things by dealing with the problems, sorting out the issues, and acquiring as one goes along the technical information which a senior administrator requires for administering those activities. (14)

Development of competencies. The responses to the question, "When you want to develop new areas of expertise, how do you accomplish this?" were grouped into the following four types of activities:

1. *Putting oneself into a new learning situation.* Several respondents stated that they consciously place themselves in a situation where they are forced to acquire knowledge or they create a situation conducive to learning. Examples include "applying for a grant and forcing myself to get the project done" or "accepting responsibility for teaching a course or writing a paper which would commit me to broadening my knowledge in this area." A more detailed response stated:

> I put myself in the position where I am forced to write professional papers. I find it necessary to take on assignments that require making a professional contribution. This does not occur normally through activities and responsibilities of my job. I do not feel (that) I gain much by reading or listening to someone else's professional contribution. I think the key is to place yourself in a learning-while-doing situation. (15)

2. *Combining professional reading with seeking expert opinion/advice from others.* Two typical responses in this category were these:

> I develop new areas of expertise by self-study and consulting and asking instruction from those I know to be experts in the area. (13)

> (During the last few years, I have taken on a number of areas of new responsibility about which I knew little or nothing. In preparing for those assignments, I read extensively in the fields) and spent a great deal of time talking with knowledgeable staff and faculty as well as people from other institutions about the operation of those activities. . . . I try to avoid becoming immersed in technical details and try to select most carefully the people who work for me and on whom I depend for specialized advice and expertise. (14)

3. *Attending workshops and conferences.* One response of this type stated:

> The highly specific, highly intensive conferences and consultation are the best means for developing new expertise. (5)

4. *Temporarily separating oneself from one's normal job responsibilities—for example, taking professional development leave.* One respondent said:

> I have been considering trying to catch up in the area of computer science, particularly as it relates to the use of computers and management on campus. The only way that I can see of redeveloping my expertise in this area after a decade's neglect is to devote something like 100% of my time for three months or six months or whatever it takes. Is it possible to launch out into significantly different areas while carrying on with your normal administrative and scholarly responsibilities? (9)

Temporary separation from one's office responsibility may be necessary for those whose professional interest cannot be incorporated easily into the existing job. The following response was instructive:

> It is very difficult for me to develop new areas of expertise unless I can in some way dovetail them with office activities and a specific project for the office. Because of limited travel funds, it is difficult to utilize special workshops for that purpose, although it is a possibility if one is willing to sacrifice participation in other professional activities. . . . I frankly have enough difficulty in maintaining existing areas of special expertise, although our work in planning and resource allocation has enabled me to move into a few new areas. (19)

Ten of the fifteen respondents identified only one method of developing new areas of expertise. The overall pattern of responses rank ordered the most frequently used methods as follows: (1) reading and self-study/seeking advice from others, (2) self-imposed learning situations, (3) attendance at conferences and workshops. The responses indicated that few have used professional leave as an opportunity for professional development even though many institutions offer such leaves to professional staff and administrators.

The use of conferences for professional development. Conferences provide opportunities for a variety of personal and professional experiences. The variety of those experiences and the differing expectations of conference attendees is evident in the following responses:

> *General comment:*
> I have not found any one source that is of particular assistance in professional development. There are sessions at the AIR Forum which are enlightening, thought-provoking, and offer new perspectives. However, these have been fewer in number than I would have liked. Outside of the Forum, I tend to look for seminars or workshops that are on topics of particular interest to me. (3)

> Because our agency becomes involved in a wide variety of issues, I have regularly been forced into new areas. Attending conferences is useful and enjoyable as a means of professional development, but I believe they contribute far less to my professional growth than the changing demands of my job. (18)

Learning through conference sessions:
Of the four to six conferences I attend annually, I have always found the SCUP (Society for College and University Planning) conferences to be most useful since they relate most directly to my personal interests in comprehensive institutional planning, resource management, and evaluation. Some of the conferences of a more technical nature sponsored by NACUBO (National Association of College and University Business Officers) are quite helpful in obtaining information of high quality on a fairly narrowly focused topic. (14)

In order to have a meaningful presentation or discussion of issues, it is important for the most knowledgeable people to attend the conference. The AIR Forums are most helpful. (10)

The informal exchange of ideas:
The opportunities for informal exchange of ideas at the AIR Forum are very helpful. (6)

The development and renewal of professional contacts:
Most conferences are a waste of time, except insofar as they permit one to develop contacts with administrators around the country and other experts with whom information linkages can be established. (14)

The formal sessions of most conferences are not particularly valuable, it seems. However, I find that informal discussions with selected colleagues are helpful, and I find it valuable to widen, renew, and strengthen my network of colleagues so that I can rely on them when I have a specific question or project to discuss with them. (9)

Personal involvement in the conference program:
The most meaningful professional development activities I have had include serving as a faculty member at two SCUP planning institutes, consulting activities, and my work with AIR. (12)

I regularly attend the AIR Forum and SCUP Annual Conference. I derive the most benefit from presenting papers at the conferences and investing the time and effort necessary to pull those papers together. (19)

Consulting as a contrast:
In addition to attending AIR and several regional meetings a year, I have had two or three consulting opportunities each year. These have been most valuable in the area of professional development. I learn as much, if not more, as I contribute on a consulting assignment. (8)

Publications and professional contributions. Since a criterion for the selection of individuals to participate in this survey was their active professional contribution to the field of institutional research, the results showed the expected high level of professional activity.

Eighteen of the nineteen respondents had completed two or more professional activities during the prior three years. A summary of the responses included the following:

- Five had published six or more articles in refereed journals.
- Seven had made five or more presentations at national professional meetings (two individuals from the first group overlapping with this one).
- Seven had served on the executive committee of one or more national or international organization.
- Three had served as editor of a national or regional publication in institutional research.

Career Path

In response to the questions concerning career path, aspirations for higher level administrative position, and the constraints on attaining such a position, one participant commented, "I think people will answer these questions differently depending upon the 'season' of their career and, perhaps, their biological or emotional life." Indeed, the aspirations, perceived constraints, thoughts of career options, and commitment to a career in higher education *did* vary, and it was possible to create a typology based on whether the respondent was at an early, mid, or late stage of career development. (The reader who finds the typology somewhat simplistic will find a discussion later in the paper of several intervening variables which reflect the greater complexities of the issue.) Three stages were identified:

- Early-career: defined as those with fewer than ten years' experience; represented generally those in their thirties
- Mid-career: ten years or more of experience; represented generally those in their forties
- Late-career: twenty years or more of administrative/instructional experience; represented generally those in their fifties.

Early-career participants. The significant characteristic of the responses from participants in this group was their tenuous commitment to an institutional research or administrative position within a higher educational setting. The respondents, all currently employed in a higher educational institution or agency, were ambivalent about whether their next position would be in higher education or outside of a university setting. There was continued interest in utilizing the skills of research and planning and in capitalizing on administrative experience, but persons in this group expressed the wish to maintain both a degree of flexibility regarding professional opportunities and sensitivity to their personal state of development. Consistent with this perspective, they did not identify specific positions to which they might aspire, preferring to keep their options open. The only constraint mentioned which would keep them from attaining a position of line responsibility was the lack of faculty experience.

Mid-career participants. When compared with the previous group, the mid-career participants were slightly older, had more experience, and appeared to hold a stronger commitment to higher education. This group was divided between those who were generally satisfied with their position and role in their institution and those whose frustration level was significantly high.

The major variables which differentiate the two mid-career groups are (1) the strength of their commitment to working in an institutional setting and (2) the level of concern expressed about career path. (See Table 2.)

Table 2
Differences between the Two Mid-Career Groups

Commitment/Concern	*Satisfied Group*	*Less Satisfied Group*
Commitment to an institutional setting	Higher	Lower
Concern about career path	Lower	Higher

Individuals in both groups would be considered successful in their professional careers. They have assumed increased levels of responsibility, are active in institutional research associations, and continue to receive recognition for professional contributions. Those in the "satisfied" group were more able to identify specific positions toward which they aspired and listed fewer constraints than the second group. The "ultimate positions" which they identified were vice president for planning and budget, president, or top-level administrator in a statewide coordinating agency. Positions as faculty member or vice president for academic affairs were mentioned less frequently.

They realize, however, that persons selected as university presidents most often have been appointed from among the faculty and have traditional academic credentials. The individuals within the mid-career, satisfied group have either re-

signed themselves to this or have some belief that this pattern can change. The following comment is instructive:

> In order to achieve these (career) objectives, it would be necessary for any candidate with my background and credentials to overcome the multifaceted biases against anyone whose educational credentials are not in one of the more traditional academic disciplines, whose career track has not proceeded along the traditional faculty route, and whose experiences are largely in the planning and institutional research areas. These constraints are substantial, but they are not insurmountable. Largely, they have not been overcome in the past because of the nature of people holding institutional research and planning-type positions. I believe this is changing. (19)

The mid-career, less-satisfied group, as mentioned earlier, is distinguished by a weaker commitment to continuing in the institutional setting. These individuals appear to have worked very hard and to have risen quite rapidly (within seven to ten years) to a director's position. They have looked around to determine the next appropriate administrative level but have found no readily discernable forward career path. Those who aspire to be presidents find constraints resulting from the traditional succession of faculty members to such positions. Fueling their frustration is the feeling that faculty selected for the presidential/vice presidential positions often lack the administrative experience and managerial skills of the institutional research directors. One respondent stated:

> This section of your questionnaire poses some very difficult questions. Having shared thoughts on this issue with my professional colleagues, I am sure that they will find the development of an appropriate response equally frustrating. The basic problem is that the career path for institutional researchers is extremely short. At best, one can move from being a statistician in an office of institutional research, to junior analyst, to senior analyst, to associate director, and then to director. From that point, I am not at all clear as to where the career path leads. From my perspective, there are several options: consulting, private foundation, government, or the private sector. For a very select few of us, there is also the option of remaining within an institution of higher education and moving to a position of vice president for planning and analysis or some similar title. (3)

What *are* the options? Some of the respondents in this group have considered positions outside their institutions and, for a variety of reasons, have decided against a switch in career at this time. This seems to result in a "no exit" feeling, as the following responses indicate:

> I am not particularly interested in assuming a consulting role at this point in time. The onerous travel associated with most such positions would preclude my meeting responsibilities to my family, which are very important. Having once worked for the government, I have no desire to get into that morass again. I would be very much interested in assuming a vice-presidential position, but having watched advertisements very closely over the past five years, it is obvious that such opportunities are few and far between. I have explored in great depth opportunities in the private sector and find that I would be placed in a situation in which a salary decrease of up to 50% would be axiomatic should I make such a move. I am neither willing, nor can I afford, to undertake such an action at the present time.
>
> At this point in time, I find myself in a very nice, very comfortable, gilt-edged, velvet cage. The salary is good, the responsibilities remain interesting, but I look with dismay at the possibility of remaining in this discipline for the next twenty years. Had I known what I was getting into, I would have left the field after five years. The experience would have been invaluable and, at that point, my ability to move in a number of different directions would not have been constrained to any serious degree. That is no longer the case. I quite frankly do not know where I go from here.
>
> One of the major difficulties of finding myself in this situation is that my motivation and commitment to the institution is not what it would be were I able to perceive a career path open to me. The absence of an obvious path means that my willingness to spend time on my own professional development has been clearly limited. The only thing that really keeps me going is my internal optimism that something useful and productive and desirable will turn up. Otherwise, as Bernie Sheehan once said, "We may all grow old together." (3)
>
> One of the deterrents to (a career) change is that, having come into this field after having had another academic career, I am not sure that I want either to start all over or have to, in five years, come back and pick up the pieces again. Before changing careers, I would somehow have to be convinced that the pay-offs in a new set of circumstances would be possible at almost zero risk to the very considerable investment that I have in my present circumstances. (9)

Some are considering a move outside of higher education—into an occupation where their research, planning, and management skills can be applied and where they might achieve greater recognition. An example:

> If I were to consider an ultimate position, I suspect that I would be more attracted to move outside the university entirely. The economy of (this area) is a remarkable story of a "boom." There are really quite unparalleled opportunities at this time for people with imagination and energy. I think that if I were to consider a move that would take me out of my groove (rut), in all intellectual honesty, I would have to survey the oil industry, ranching, real estate, or some activity that employs those sorts of planning and management skills that we get to know something about in doing our work. (9)

Late-career participants. Of the three groups discussed in this typology, the "late career" group included those most clearly satisfied with their present positions and professional careers. Five of the nineteen respondents in the study indicated that they were satisfied with their roles and responsibilities and did not anticipate looking for another position. All five have had extensive careers of over twenty years; all are 52 years of age or more. Some of their comments follow:

> I regard my present position as one of the best and most rewarding in the country. I have given no serious thought recently to moving. Although in the next few years I may "burn out" in my present job, I am pretty much at what I consider to be the top of my profession and would move only in order to take on a different kind of responsibility. I would certainly consider the possibility of a high position in the federal government or, under the right circumstances, a university presidency. . . .
>
> . . . I believe that every executive owes it to himself and to his profession to consider opportunities of an unusual character if and when they are presented. Certainly, if I were called upon to assume a position of public service I would feel compelled to consider it, but I do not intend to seek such an opportunity in the foreseeable future. (14)
>
> I expect to stay in higher education and in administration. I do miss teaching, but it became too demanding to try to combine it with my administrative position. . . . I am quite satisfied where I am, and I do not anticipate looking for another position. On the other hand, if a vice presidency were offered to me, I guess I would seriously consider it. . . . I feel that my staff and I are making a real—and recognized—contribution to the university, and that meets my objective. (6)
>
> I'm not considering any position much higher than what I have now, but a fancier title would be neat. I don't want to go much higher. . . . I hope to stay with my present type of job. There is plenty of fun and challenge here. (7)
>
> As far as a future career path is concerned, I might consider a college presidency or the top-level position in our statewide coordinating agency. The state has an attractive retirement program, and I am currently in my 25th year. It would not be beneficial for me to leave the state or work in the state much past thirty years. I must finish thirty, however, to make retirement favorable. . . . My situation is certainly not the typical one. I have several outside business interests and plan to "retire" to more directly manage them. (8)

Whether the general level of contentment is related to the "season" of their careers or to other factors such as a gradual accommodation to a personally acceptable level of professional achievement in their careers, the satisfaction of this group is evident in their comments. It should be emphasized that none of these individuals, though close to retirement age, has slowed intellectually or professionally. All are

actively involved in writing/publishing; all continue to make professional contributions through presentations and workshops.

Are Career Aspirations Institution Specific?

The late-career group—where respondents were the most satisfied with their present positions and institutions, regardless of institutional size or control—was the only one that identified a particular type of institution as important. Six of the remaining fourteen respondents identified a "major university" as a factor in a potential move. Discussions with Canadian colleagues revealed that the small number of "major Canadian institutions," combined with the low turnover of positions, makes job mobility and professional advancement particularly difficult for those wishing to remain in Canada. Mobility in institutional research and similar administrative positions within the United States also appears very restricted.

A few respondents related their potential mobility to factors conducive to personal growth and productivity. Two illustrations follow:

> I do not have a fixed agenda nor end point in mind for my career development. I am trying to maintain a degree of flexibility as far as available opportunities are concerned and sensitivity to my own state of development and changing moods. Some of the things I look for in my work are: the opportunities for personal growth, a need for variety, the quality of my colleagues and the work environment, and the stability of the organization. These factors have all been present (here, and) it has been a very positive experience. (18)

> I would be willing to move to a proper position almost regardless of the type of institution, but I cannot say that I would be happy at a community college nor would I necessarily be happy and productive at just any institution.
>
> The only serious consideration that I have given to a major professional change in the direction of my career has been that of more responsible administrative positions or a major faculty position. I still think that the best position in any university is to be a full professor who can contribute in a significant way to the literature of his field and do an outstanding job of inspired teaching. I suspect that's what I would rather do than anything else.
>
> The major constraint would be to break the habit of being involved in administration for more than thirty years. I probably couldn't stand the assumed inactivity of a full-time teaching position. I would just be too relaxed. (13)

Some Thoughts and Recommendations Regarding Professional Development

In the discussion of career paths, it was noted that several intervening variables appeared to be important to satisfaction in the present position and to evaluation of career options.

1. *Intellectual curiosity.* One of the satisfactions inherent within the institutional research and planning position is the opportunity for continual intellectual challenge. This was indicated in the responses of those who read to keep up with the field, to solve a problem, or "to get the necessary background to ask the next question." The saliency of this intellectual quest and the extent to which it is attained appear to be important variables related to satisfaction with the position. One respondent commented:

> If one takes a reasonably scholarly view of our field, I suppose it really isn't so much discrete as it is analogue or continuous. That is, as a scholar in any field, you don't think so much of becoming professor, dean, and then president as you do think in terms of becoming better and better informed in your field, having a clearer understanding of the operative factors and the various relationships between cause and effect, and I suppose, becoming generally more accomplished in the sense of getting different things on your agenda accomplished—like a magnum opus on some topic that you have spent a decade or two pondering. (9)

2. *Acceptance in the academic institution.* The most common constraints on attainment of the desired position of vice president or president appear to be (1) lack of faculty experience or (2) possession of a degree and experience outside the traditional academic areas. None of the respondents to this survey was willing to relinquish the considerable investment already made in the doctoral degree and administrative experience in higher education in order to switch careers.

Before a change in the status quo can occur, two other changes will have to take place. First, institutional research and planning professionals must make a better presentation of their intellectual abilities and scholarly efforts. It is necessary for them to realize that, although they are respected professionals in an academic institution, they are not accepted academically by either the faculty or senior administrators. For this reason and because opportunities are scarce and the field extremely competitive, few will reach the vice-presidential level. Those who choose an academic path may have to leave institutional research for a number of years to assume full-time teaching and research responsibilities and to complete scholarly research worthy of the traditionally respected academic journals. It is probably only by operating within that evaluation and reward system that an individual will achieve acceptance by both faculty members and the vice presidents and presidents who will make future personnel decisions.

Secondly, the top levels of higher education must become more accepting of individuals with combined administrative and teaching experience. As financial constraints increase and institutions become more aware of the importance of appointing administrators with skills in institutional and financial planning, there is greater likelihood that top managerial positions will open to individuals with academic/institutional research *and* administrative experience.

3. *Research versus operational responsibilities.* During the last several years, there has been a trend among institutions to combine institutional research and planning activities with financial planning and budgetary responsibilities. The trend to improve the coordination of institutional planning and budgeting comes at a time of increased financial constraints and the resultant demand for the institution to evaluate closely its priorities while undertaking difficult reallocation decisions.

Such activities increase the visibility and importance of the institutional research office but also move it from an orientation of data and analysis and research to one of policy analysis and advice on the implementation of institutional priorities. While this trend may be viewed as necessary by the institution and while it may be personally and professionally rewarding to the director and staff, it also may strain the intellectual and emotional energies of the individuals involved. It is very difficult to prevent operational budgetary concerns from diminishing the research activities of the office. In situations where there is insufficient staff, the director may be pulled in many competing directions, making it difficult to accomplish the intellectually stimulating and scholarly activity which may be personally important. The following comment addresses this dilemma:

> . . . I am perhaps a little unorthodox among our colleagues in this regard, but I feel that those involved in institutional research and planning ought to avoid as far as humanly possible becoming involved in the day-to-day administrative activities of the institution. I, of course, am well aware of the arguments on the other side that have to do with staying in touch and being relevant and having your staff influential in the decision process. Nonetheless, I am reasonably convinced that it is possible and preferable to spend some time trying to keep yourself "well connected" vicariously

so that you do not burn up the time and the mental-nervous energy and emotion that can go into potentially important administrative decision and detail. It really is a question not of importance but of division of labor and, hence, of priority. I think, for example, that one can do teaching and research. In fact, I think they are inseparable, as I hinted above. I am much less convinced that one can do administration and anything else. I think many of the good administrators that I have watched over the years have lived on their intellectual capital. (9)

It is the opinion of the author that institutions will, increasingly, combine research, planning, and budgeting activities, with the result that research offices will become more and more involved in operational issues. While this may be preferred, it will mean that the director and staff will find it more difficult to reserve time for professional development and scholarly research. The professional associations will need to recognize these changing job responsibilities and offer appropriate workshops and/or institutes in response.

4. *Alternate careers*. We have discussed the relatively short career path within institutional research. Many of the professionals in this field, however, have marketable skills in research, management, planning, and finance.

The boundaries between higher education and the private sector are becoming more permeable. Within the next ten years, we can anticipate a much greater movement of individuals between higher education and business than is presently the case. It seems logical to expect, for example, that the expansion of cable television and educational programming and the combination of communication equipment with computer technology will provide opportunities for those with imagination and educational research skills.

Some movement is already taking place: for example, one participant in this survey has taken professional leave to work with a telephone company in order to improve his knowledge of computer information and of the impact of technology on management decisions; and an academic administrator is considering full-time employment with a computer firm to develop courses for eventual transmission to home computers.

Professional organizations like AIR and SCUP can serve those professionals who feel encapsulated within higher education. By developing and providing information about professional internships and career opportunities in other areas, they can help to improve the skills and experience of those professionals who choose to remain within higher education and increase the chances for mobility for those who might wish to leave it.

Note: A copy of the survey instrument is available upon request. Contact the author, William P. Fenstemacher, Director of Institutional Planning, University of Massachusetts-Boston, Boston, MA 02125.

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